



United States Senator
Richard Shelby
REPORTS TO ALABAMA



Reforming our Intelligence Community

By: Senator Richard Shelby

I last wrote about intelligence reform in August, shortly after the 9/11 Commission released its report detailing the problems that led to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The Commission's report also outlined specific recommendations for change, which received strong support from both Houses of Congress and the White House. After months of deliberation, Congress passed, and the President signed into law, an intelligence reform bill that will overhaul our nation's intelligence community and bring about long-overdue change.

One of the most significant reforms included in the intelligence reform bill is the creation of a National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). The creation of this new Center, is key to our country's ability to effectively collect and analyze intelligence. The NCTC will serve as a joint operational planning and intelligence center aimed at fully integrating the intelligence received by the separate intelligence-gathering agencies. These capabilities will allow our intelligence community to develop joint counterterrorism plans and work together effectively and efficiently to fight terrorism. The NCTC will include a separate National Counterproliferation Center that will focus on weapons of mass destruction, related materials and technologies and their delivery systems

to terrorists and terrorist organizations and coordinate U.S. efforts and activities on those issues. Ultimately, the goal of the NCTC is to break down the institutional barriers that, for so long, have impeded the intelligence community's ability to share information and determine the connection among potential threats to our homeland. This function is critical to our national security.

The legislation also includes some specific immigration reforms, including more stringent immigration regulations. Specifically, the bill requires the number of full-time border control agents to increase by 2,000 each year until 2010 and the number of immigration and customs enforcement agents to increase by 800 each year during the same time period. Another critical component of these reforms are the increased criminal penalties for illegal alien smuggling and harboring.

The bill also establishes the new position of Director of National Intelligence (DNI). The DNI will manage the entire intelligence community and serve as the President's principal intelligence advisor. It is my hope that this new position will help to ensure that the intelligence information from each agency is shared effectively and analyzed collaboratively to break down the barriers that impede the sharing of this vitally

important information. For too long, the President has not been able to rely on one single individual to answer the question, "What do we know about current terrorist threats against our homeland?" I am hopeful that the DNI will be able fill that void.

While we have created a Director of National Intelligence, I remain concerned about the ultimate authority of this new position. I had hoped that this bill would make the DNI a cabinet-level position with more control and strict budgetary authority. I have been a longtime advocate of a strong DNI, and I believe that it is important that he or she have the command and control authority to chart the path to real reform. I am hopeful that the DNI will prove to be an impetus for real, structural reform rather than an impediment or an added layer of bureaucracy.

There is never a day that we are not reminded of the tragedy of September 11, 2001, and we must continue to focus on how to better protect ourselves from the very real threat of terrorism. This bill is an improvement over the current system, but I believe that we must remain committed to enacting additional reforms when necessary and continue to work together to make our country safer and more secure. This is the least that we can do to honor the lives of those lost on that tragic day.